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DRAFTED BY ARA:SDEATON:MAS
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES IMMEDIATE
INFO AMEMBASSY LA PAZ IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY

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E.O. 12065: GDS 8-21-86

TAGS: PORG, BL, AR

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION BETWEEN AMBASSADOR AJA ESPIL AND DAS
EATON

1. SECRET - ENTIRE TEXT.

2. AMBASSADOR AJA ESPIL RETURNED TO WASHINGTON ON AUGUST
19 FROM HIS STINT IN RIO WITH THE INTER-AMERICA JURIDICAL
COMMISSION AND IMMEDIATELY CALLED DAS EATON TO SUGGEST
A CONVERSATION ON THE CURRENT STATE OF ARGENTINE-U.S.
RELATIONS. HE SAID HE HAD ADVANCED HIS RETURN A DAY
OR TWO BECAUSE OF PRESS REPORTS IN ARGENTINA AND BRAZIL
THAT TENSIONS IN U.S.-ARGENTINE RELATIONS MIGHT LEAD

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TO HIS NOT RETURNING AT ALL. THE FOLLOWING ARE THE
PRINCIPAL POINTS THAT CAME OUT OF THE TWO AND ONE-HALF
HOUR LUNCHEON CONVERSATION ON AUGUST 20.

3. AJA SEEMED PRIMARILY INTERESTED IN (A) THE DEGREE
TO WHICH THE U.S. MIGHT STIMULATE PUBLICITY OVER THE
ARGENTINE-BOLIVIAN CONNECTION, (B) WHETHER THERE WERE
PROSPECTS FOR A CONTINUING PRIVATE DIALOGUE ON BOLIVIA
AND OTHER ISSUES OF MUTUAL CONCERN, AND (C) WHETHER
THERE WOULD BE A DELAY IN NAMING A NEW AMBASSADOR TO
ARGENTINA DUE TO POLITICAL DIFFERENCES. HE RECOGNIZED
THAT THE BOLIVIAN ISSUE WAS A SETBACK, BUT ARGUED THAT
THE ONLY SENSIBLE THING TO DO WAS TO CONTINUE PRIVATE
DIALOGUE AND NOT TO INHIBIT THAT DIALOGUE BY ACRIMONIOUS
PUBLIC STATEMENTS.

4. EATON NOTED THAT U.S. PUBLIC STATEMENTS HAD BEEN
DELIBERATELY RESTRAINED, SAID HE AGREED WITH THE IMPORTANCE
OF CONTINUING PRIVATE DIALOGUE, AND ALSO SAID THAT
ANY DELAY IN THE NAMING OF A NEW U.S. AMBASSADOR TO
ARGENTINA SHOULD BE ATTRIBUTED TO INTERNAL U.S. PROCEDURES
AND NOT TO DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE U.S. AND ARGENTINA.

Department of State, A/GIS/IPS/SRP
Change to _____
(☒) Release () Excise () Deny () Declassify
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With concurrence of: _____
IPS by 12 obtained _____ not obt. _____
Date 12-15-16

Declassified Case: NW 57067 Date: 06-07-2013

5. THERE WAS DISCUSSION OF THE DEGREE OF ARGENTINE INVOLVEMENT IN BOLIVIA, WITH AJA RESTATING THE CONSISTENT ARGENTINE POSITION THAT ARGENTINE MILITARY AND INTELLIGENCE ADVISORS IN BOLIVIA TOTALLED ONLY 15 TO 20. EATON SAID WE BELIEVED THERE WERE AT LEAST TWO TO THREE TIMES THAT NUMBER. EATON WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT, AS A MATTER OF POLICY, HAD DELIBERATELY TRIGGERED THE BOLIVIAN COUP ON THE SPECIFIC DAY OF JULY 17. RATHER HE BELIEVED THAT SOME ARGENTINE ADVISORS IN BOLIVIA, AMONG THEM LT. COL. DURAN, HAD

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ENCOURAGED THE IDEA OF A COUP AND HELPED IN ITS PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION. THE DECISION ON TIMING PRESUMABLY HAD BEEN MADE BY THE BOLIVIANS. WEIGHT WAS GIVEN TO HIS BELIEF BY PRESIDENT VIDELA'S OPEN ADMISSION THAT ARGENTINA HAD BEEN SYMPATHETIC TO A COUP (ALTHOUGH VIDELA SAID ARGENTINA HAD NOT TAKEN PART IN IT) AND VIDELA'S STRONG STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR THE GARCIA-MEZA GOVERNMENT.

6. AJA SAID HE HAD NO DOUBT THAT SOME ARGENTINE ADVISORS HAD DONE WHAT EATON SAID THEY HAD DONE. IN HONESTY, THAT WAS WHAT ONE HAD TO EXPECT FROM MILITARY ADVISORS. HE ALSO COMMENTED THAT VIDELA HAD AGAIN PROVEN HIMSELF, BY HIS STATEMENT, TO BE AN HONEST MAN WITH LITTLE GUILT IN POLITICAL AFFAIRS.

7. EATON CONTINUED THAT THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE WAS NOT SO MUCH THE NUMBER OF ARGENTINE ADVISORS IN BOLIVIA. INSTEAD IT WAS THAT AS A MATTER OF HIGH POLICY THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT HAD BEEN SYMPATHETIC TO THE COUP WHICH HAD INTERRUPTED A PROMISING DEMOCRATIC PROCESS, AND NOW WAS SUPPORTING A CORRUPT BOLIVIAN GOVERNMENT THAT HAD NO POSITIVE PROGRAM, WAS DEEPLY IMPLICATED IN THE DRUG TRADE, AND COULD ONLY GOVERN BY A DEGREE OF REPRESSION THAT WOULD POLARIZE BOLIVIA AND PROMOTE THE EXTREME LEFT. ARGENTINA ATTEMPTED TO JUSTIFY THIS POSITION ON THE BASIS THAT A SILES GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE PRODUCED MARXISM IN BOLIVIA. THE UNITED STATES AND MANY OTHERS IN EUROPE AND IN LATIN AMERICA BELIEVED JUST THE

OPPOSITE. THEY WERE CONVINCED A SILES GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE REPRESENTED A HOPE FOR CONSOLIDATION OF LONG-TERM POLITICAL MODERATION IN BOLIVIA, WHILE THE GOVERNMENT ARGENTINA WAS SUPPORTING WOULD BE THE REAL SOURCE OF A MARXIST THREAT THROUGH ABUSE AND REPRESSION. ARGENTINA WAS THUS EXHIBITING THE SAME LACK OF VISION THAT THOSE WHO SUPPORTED BATISTA IN CUBA AND SOMOZA IN NICARAGUA

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HAD DEMONSTRATED.

8. AJA DID NOT CONTEST THIS ANALYSIS. INSTEAD HE TURNED THE CONVERSATION TO A BRIEF DISCUSSION OF THE RESPECTIVE ROLES OF BRAZIL AND ARGENTINA IN BOLIVIA, INTIMATING THAT ONE REASON FOR ARGENTINA'S EARLY RECOGNITION OF BOLIVIA MIGHT HAVE BEEN RIVALRY WITH BRAZIL. EATON SAID HE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT. HE THOUGHT IT HAD BEEN VERY SIMPLY CONCERN OVER GARCIA MEZA'S SHAKINESS AT THAT MOMENT. HE NOTED THAT BRAZIL HAD MOVED CAUTIOUSLY WITH REGARD TO BOLIVIA. HE SAID THAT, IN ANY CASE, THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT NOW HAD A LARGE RESPONSIBILITY IN BOLIVIA. AS THE PRIMARY FOREIGN ACTOR THERE, IT WOULD PLAY A LARGE ROLE IN WHAT HAPPENED AND IT WOULD BE JUDGED INTERNATIONALLY AS WELL AS INTERNALLY ON IT.

ALL OF THIS SUGGESTED THAT ARGENTINA SHOULD WANT, IN ITS OWN INTEREST, TO INFLUENCE THE BOLIVIAN MILITARY INSTITUTION TOWARD INTERNAL REFORM AND PROFESSIONALIZATION, HUMAN RIGHTS MODERATION, AND A RETURN OF BOLIVIA TO CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENT. AJA SEEMED TO AGREE AND ASKED IF THERE WERE ANY BOLIVIAN MILITARY LEADERS WHO MIGHT BE PREPARED TO UNDERTAKE SUCH A CHANGE OF DIRECTION. EATON SAID THERE WERE, BUT THEY HAD NO POWER AT THIS JUNCTURE. AJA ASKED EATON ABOUT BANZER'S POSITION. EATON SAID HE THOUGHT BANZER HAD STAYED ALOOF FROM THE COUP, BUT HIS SKIRTS WERE NOT CLEAN FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF CORRUPTION. MOREOVER, THE DEGREE OF SUPPORT HE HAD IN THE MILITARY WAS UNCERTAIN.

9. AT THE OUTSET OF THE CONVERSATION, AJA GAVE HIS BLOW-BY-BLOW ACCOUNT OF WHAT LED UP TO THE ARGENTINE RECOGNITION OF BOLIVIA, ENDING WITH HIS IMPRESSION OF HOW UPSET FOREIGN MINISTER PASTOR WAS OVER THE

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CANCELLATION OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY BOWDLER'S VISIT. EATON SAID HE WANTED TO MAKE IT VERY CLEAR THAT HE DID NOT THINK ARGENTINA OR THE ARGENTINE FOREIGN MINISTRY HAD ANY REASON TO BE UPSET. THE AFFRONT HAD BEEN AGAINST THE UNITED STATES AND AMBASSADOR BOWDLER. ARGENTINA HAD GONE BACK ON ITS WORD NOT TO RECOGNIZE BOLIVIA FIRST AND HAD DONE THAT ON THE EVE OF BOWDLER'S VISIT. AJA ADMITTED THAT EATON HAD A POINT. HE SAID HE HAD ARGUED

STRONGLY AGAINST THE TIMING OF THE RECOGNITION. MOREOVER, HE SAID, IN CONFIDENCE, THAT IN FACT HE HAD AFTERWARDS ASKED VIOLA, IN A PRIVATE CONVERSATION, IF HE COULD SEE ANY GOOD REASON WHY ARGENTINA HAD MOVED SO PRECIPITOUSLY TO RECOGNIZE BOLIVIA ON THE EVE OF BOWDLER'S VISIT. VIOLA HAD SAID HE SAW NO GOOD REASON AND THOUGHT IT WAS A DUMB MOVE.

10. CONTINUING WITH REGARD TO VIOLA, WHO HE SAID WAS NOW A CERTAINTY TO BE THE NEXT PRESIDENT, AJA SAID VIOLA WANTS VERY MUCH TO HAVE GOOD RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. AJA HAD SUGGESTED THAT VIOLA DESIGNATE SOMEONE AS A CHANNEL TO THE NEW U.S. CHARGE, AND, IN HIS PRESENCE, VIOLA HAD CALLED COLONEL PINO TO ASK HIM TO PERFORM THAT FUNCTION. (AJA ALSO HAD MADE A SIMILAR SUGGESTION TO VIDELA, WHO HAD DESIGNATED CERDA.) MOREOVER, VIOLA GAVE AJA TELEPHONE NUMBERS ON WHICH HE COULD CALL HIM DIRECTLY WHEN HE NEEDED TO.

11. IN THE FINAL STAGES OF THE CONVERSATION, AJA EXPRESSED RELIEF AT THE POSSIBILITY OF CONTINUED DIALOGUE ON BOLIVIA AND OTHER MATTERS OF MUTUAL INTEREST. HE WAS CONCERNED OVER POSSIBLE CONTINUED BRUISED FEELINGS ON THE PART OF PASTOR, BUT WAS CHEERED BY THE VIEWS OF THE POSITIVE TONE OF THE MEETING BETWEEN RUSER AND PASTOR. HE STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF A POSSIBLE MEETING BETWEEN FOREIGN MINISTER PASTOR AND SECRETARY MUSKIE AT THE U.N. AT

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THE END OF SEPTEMBER. HE ENDED BY SAYING THAT HE HAD TALKED ONCE AGAIN WITH PRESIDENT VIDELA ABOUT TLATELOLCO AND THOUGHT ARGENTINA NOW WAS REALLY NEAR A POSITIVE DECISION ON THIS. MOREOVER, HE HAD TALKED TO CASTRO MADERO ABOUT POSSIBLY COMING TO WASHINGTON TO RETURN AMBASSADOR SMITH'S VISIT TO BUENOS AIRES AND CASTRO MADERO HAS SEEMED RECEPTIVE TO THE IDEA.

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12. COMMENT: AJA'S ATTITUDE DURING THIS CONVERSATION WAS IN THE PATTERN OF THOSE ARGENTINE OFFICIALS WHO WANT TO CONTINUE A PRIVATE DIALOGUE WHILE AVOIDING PUBLIC CONFRONTATION. HE UNDERSTANDS U.S. PERCEPTIONS AND SENSITIVITIES. TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, HE WANTS TO TRY TO REBUILD WHAT WAS LOST IN THE RELATIONSHIP AS THE RESULT OF BOLIVIA. INTERESTINGLY- HE SEES FOREIGN MINISTER PASTOR AS MORE OF A FACTOR THAN WE WOULD HAVE THOUGHT, AND AT LEAST A MERCURIAL, IF NOT OUTRIGHT NEGATIVE ONE. HE NOTES THAT PASTOR IS VIDELA'S BROTHER-IN-LAW. THE CONVERSATION TOOK PLACE BEFORE MARTINEZ DE HOZ HAD GIVEN US ARGENTINA'S NEGATIVE POSITION ON GRAINS, AND WHEN INITIAL REACTIONS ON THIS ISSUE HAD SEEMED POSITIVE. AJA APPEARS TO HAVE ESTABLISHED A PERSONAL LINE TO VIOLA,

AND HIS DESCRIPTION OF VIOLA'S REACTION IS POSITIVE. HE ARGUES THAT ARRANGEMENTS SHOULD BE MADE FOR VIOLA TO COME TO THE UNITED STATES AT SOME POINT BETWEEN HIS PRESUMED SELECTION AS PRESIDENT IN SEPTEMBER AND HIS ACTUAL TAKING OFFICE NEXT MARCH. CHRISTOPHER

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